

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
THE MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION

THE CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE: AN OVERVIEW

In partial fulfillment of their graduation requirements, students in the Western Michigan University School of Communication's MA Program must complete a capstone experience. The purpose of the capstone experience is to provide a summative demonstration of student competencies acquired through Master's-level coursework. Thus, the capstone experience should merge theory and practice, extend theoretical insights, and demonstrate research skills and communication knowledge.

To fulfill the capstone experience requirement, a student will complete **one** of the following options:

- Thesis
- Comprehensive Exams
- Professional Project

Each capstone experience option consists of both a written and oral demonstration of competency. Responsibility for the direction and supervision of the capstone project rests with the student-selected faculty advisor. The roles of the faculty advisor and the members of the student's committee as well as procedures for completing each capstone option are outlined in the following sections.

FACULTY ADVISOR

For each capstone option, students will be required to choose a faculty advisor by the completion of nine credits of their graduate course work. An advisor should be chosen by the student based on a match between the student and faculty advisor's substantive areas of interest.

The faculty advisor is charged with:

- Advising the student on coursework appropriate for the student's substantive area of interest
- Advising the student regarding selection of other committee members
- Helping the student choose a capstone option
- Monitoring the student's academic and capstone progress

- Initiating and facilitating capstone committee meetings
- Determining the readiness of the capstone project for committee review
- Evaluating the oral defense of the capstone project
- Advising the student regarding relevant university and departmental policies, procedures, and documentation

CAPSTONE COMMITTEE

The student and faculty advisor must choose members of the graduate faculty to serve as members of the student's capstone committee. The committee should include a minimum of three members of the graduate faculty (including the advisor). Two of the committee members must be from the School of Communication. Students may also choose additional members from allied disciplines around the University.

Appointment of a committee involves:

- Mutual agreement between the student and the prospective committee members
- Formal appointment of the committee member by the Director of the School (or chair designee)
- Notification of and approval of the appointment by the dean of the Graduate College, where required by current University policy.

The purpose of this capstone committee is to provide the range of expertise necessary to advise the student on the capstone project and to evaluate the project to ensure it represents quality work in the discipline of communication.

The capstone committee is charged with:

- Reviewing and evaluating specific steps in the capstone project
- Providing consultation during the course of the capstone project
- Reviewing and evaluating the written component of the project
- Evaluating the oral defense of the capstone project